

Abroad

Madrid

Hesitation Waltz

During the last election campaign, one of the planks in the platform of the Spanish Socialist Party was the abandonment of membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which the previous parliament had ratified. Now that Felipe González's Socialist government has settled itself in power, this question keeps awkwardly coming up. Like the Socialist government in Greece, which also pledged itself to withdraw from NATO, González and his men are obviously having second thoughts. But pressure is mounting to settle the issue one way or another. Alfonso Guerra, deputy premier, has come out for early withdrawal, without specifying how this might affect the bilateral military agreements with the United States, which long preceded the NATO association. Spain's formal adhesion to NATO may not make so much difference to the long-view strategic planners, since Spain has nowhere to go outside of Western Europe, but practically it would make a considerable difference. As González grows in experience, he may decide that this is one campaign promise that should be forgotten.

Brasília

Latin Debts

Two of the biggest debtor nations in Latin America are striving to conform to standards of international practice in order to win support from the International Monetary Fund, but the struggle is far from easy. Brazil, for example, has announced that wages will go up by only 8 per cent in the next two years and that interest rates will be reduced. These measures will chiefly affect the industrial triangle of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte. At the same time, Argentina, which has a foreign debt of \$65 billion (compared to Brazil's \$90 billion), will default on one of the IMF's basic requirements, namely to hold the inflation rate for this year to 160 per cent. Consumer prices rose by 15.8 per cent in June; if that trend should continue, Argentina will suffer the highest annual inflation rate—340 per cent—since the military junta took over the country in 1976. The June increase was blamed on speculators who cashed in on the redenomination of the Argentine peso. Economy Minister Jorge Wehbe is warning that consumer price controls may be imposed as a consequence. Higher interest rates may be another recourse for the government, which has been relying on unenforceable agreements with private companies to limit price rises.

Leningrad

Third Generation

A young Soviet dissident has been sentenced by a court here to five years in a strict-regime camp and three more years of "internal exile" for participating in the work of an independent trade union and for receiving proscribed literature from abroad. The dissident, Rostislav Evdokimov, 32, says he does not oppose the state but the Soviet Communist Party. He was expelled from Leningrad University in 1971 despite a creditable academic record, and his writings have been published in Russian-language journals abroad. His political position is based on patriotism and

religious conviction, and opposition to violence and terrorism. Evdokimov's family has suffered political persecution for three generations. His grandfather, who was a captain in the Soviet navy, died in one of Stalin's concentration camps. His father was an anti-Communist writer who died of cancer just after a long term in a psychiatric hospital where he was refused proper medical treatment.

Moscow

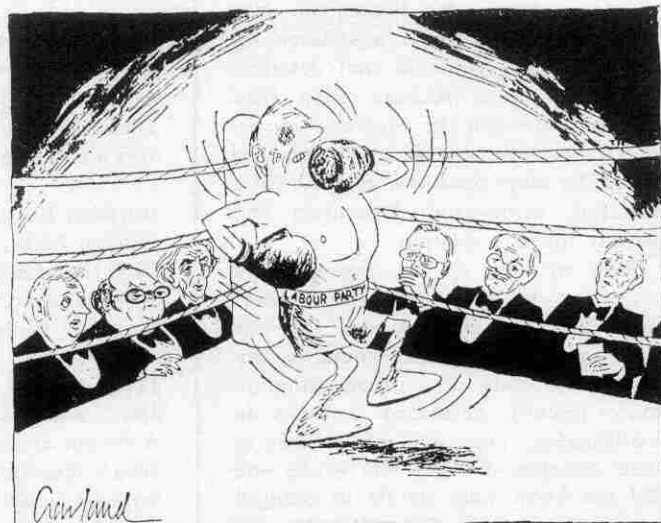
Splitsville

The divorce rate in European Russia has climbed to 950,000 a year, approaching half the total number of marriages, according to a Soviet sociologist writing in *Pravda*, and Soviet authorities fear a general breakdown of the family as a unit. Every fourth adult now lives alone, generally because of divorce. The number of female-headed families is in the millions. The article said that the loosening of traditional family ties was mainly responsible, and cited as an example the emergence of the two- or three-income family. Young people are going into marriage with attitudes of increasing irresponsibility and are unprepared to deal with growing materialism, the article continues, and there has been a rise in alcoholism among the young. Family integrity and harmony are more desirable than ever, the paper says: "As the rhythm of life increases, . . . so the family is of ever greater importance to people as a rest home for their nerves and an oasis for their souls."

London

Junior Jackpots

The common slot machine, or one-armed bandit, has become such a craze among British schoolchildren that Gamblers Anonymous is thinking of creating a junior division to handle the addiction. One out of every five persons who turn to the organization for help is between 12 and 17. These young gamblers regularly steal money for their habit and automatically squander their lunch and pocket money on what are called locally "fruit machines." Gamblers Anonymous finds that they are "so young that they do not relate with the older people" in the organization. Hence the idea of a junior operation. "It does not matter," a spokesman said, "whether you spend £5 or £50,000 a week; if gambling disrupts your life, you have a problem."



Garland, *London Daily Telegraph*

Rothco

"Another left to the jaw, followed by a right to the body."